COMITIA AMERICANA MEDALS

Central Ohio Numismatic Association

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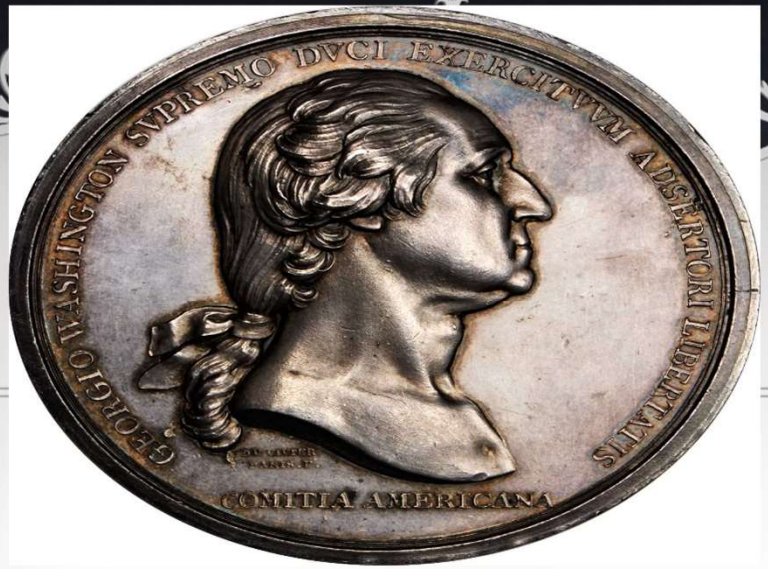
Bruce Smith

THE FIRST MEDAL: WASHINGTON BEFORE BOSTON

In February1776 , at Washington's request, Colonel Henry Knox transported 55 artillery pieces from Fort Ticonderoga to Boston, over 200 miles in the snow.

On the morning of March 05, the British awake to find these guns bearing down on them from Dorchester Heights. Their position is "difficult." They sail away on March 17.

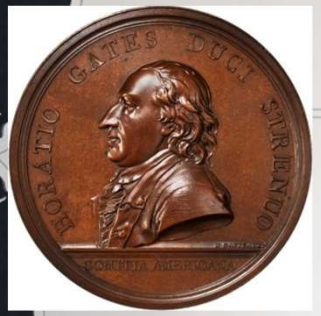


March 25, 1776: Resolved, That the thanks of this Congress, in their own name, and in the name of the thirteen United Colonies, whom they represent, be presented to His Excellency General Washington, and the officers and soldiers under his command, for their wise and spirited conduct in the siege and acquisition of Boston; and that a medal of gold be struck in commemoration of this great event, and presented to His Excellency; and that a committee of three be appointed to prepare a letter of thanks and a proper device for the medal.

A SERIES OF 11 MEDALS HONORING HEROES OF THE REVOLUTION AND COMMEMORATING IMPORTANT EVENTS, ALONG WITH FIVE RELATED MEDALS ARE REFERRED TO AS “COMITIA AMERICANA” MEDALS.

❖The First, Washington Before Boston was struck in Paris in 1789. Restrikes of Comitia Americana medals are still produced.

HORATIO GATES AT SARATOGA: OCTOBER 17,1777



- The original British plan was to cut off the New England Colonies. Sir William Howe took his army south, however.
- Gates commanded a significantly larger army which defeated Burgoyne in two battles one in September and the other in October.
- Commanding from two miles in the rear, Gates received credit for victory which might have been more properly given to Daniel Morgan and Benedict Arnold.
- Saratoga led to recognition by the French.
- Congress authorized a gold medal on November 04, 1777.

ANTHONY WAYNE AT STONY POINT: JULY 15 1779

Brigadier General Wayne led a successful night bayonet attack on a fortified British position on the Hudson River about 30 miles north of New York.

Wayne was wounded during the battle.

Following the victory Wayne sent Washington this message, "The fort and garrison, with Colonel Johnston, are ours. Our officers and men behaved like men who are determined to be free."

Congress voted a gold medal to Wayne the day after Washington's report of the victory.

DE FLEURY AT STONY POINT: JULY 15 1779

French Colonel Francois-Louis Teissedre de Fleury was the first man over the ramparts.

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He struck the British colors making himself an obvious target.

Congress voted a silver medal to DeFleury the day after Washington's report of the victory.

JOHN STEWART AT STONY POINT: JULY 15 1779

Major Stewart led his contingent of 100 – 150 on a near vertical assault of the objective. Their muskets were unloaded, and they attacked with bayonets only.

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Congress voted a silver medal Stewart the day after Washington's report of the victory.

JOHN PAUL JONES
BONHOMME RICHARD AND SERAPIS SEPTEMBER 23, 1779

Scottish born Jones sailing a former merchant vessel defeated the Serapis off the coast of England in close fighting during which a party from Jones' ship boarded the British vessel.

The victory against a ship of the British Navy which was seen as "near invincible" was widely celebrated. Congress did not award his gold medal for eight years however.

HENRY LEE AT PAULUS HOOK
AUGUST 19, 1779

Major Lee's victory near New York was not an critical battle, but along with the victory at Stony Point, it was important in building morale.

Lee led a bayonet charge and took the British outpost without firing a shot.

DANIEL MORGAN AT THE COWPENS: JANUARY 17, 1781

Morgan was present at many major battles during the Revolution.

He had left the army to recover his health when the British opened a Southern Campaign in 1780. The battle of the Cowpens was a critical victory over Banastre Tartleton's forces that lead eventually to Conwallis's army being bottled up at Yorktown.

Morgan's gold medal was stolen, and a replacement from copy dies was provided to the family.

WILLIAM WASHINGTON AT THE COWPENS: JANUARY 17, 1781

Captain Washington was a distant cousin of the General.

Commanding cavalry, Washington kept his troops hidden deployed them surprising the British.

A silver medal was awarded to Washington.

JOHN EAGER HOWARD AT THE COWPENS: JANUARY 17, 1781

Lieutenant Colonel John Eager Howard had served with distinction in the north.

At the Cowpens, he commanded the Continental troops. When the militia gave way, the British believing they were winning charged up a hill into Howard's Continentals and Washington's cavalry.

A silver medal was awarded to Howard.

NATHANAEL GREENE AT EUTAW SPRINGS: SEPTEMBER 08, 1781

Greene took over command of the Southern army following the dismissal of gates by Congress.

The Battle of Eutaw Springs was technically a British victory, but it marked the end of British attempts to control the Carolinas.

Major General Greene was voted a gold medal for his service.

THE OTHER MEDALS

There are three Benjamin Franklin medals

THE OTHER MEDALS

Libertas Americana – often though of as the most beautiful American medal

THE OTHER MEDALS

The Diplomatic Medal of the United States

THE ORIGINAL PLAN

Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, and Thomas Jefferson, among others, were directly involved in the creation of these medals.

These medals were to be used to spread the ideals and accomplishments of the new nation.

There are many unanswered questions about the dies, the medals and their fates.

COLLECTING

- Originals –

FUGETABOUTIT!!!

$111, 625 March 2014

RESTRIKES, COPY DIES

Paris Mint – Edges marks denote time frame. More recent strikings have the year on the edge.

U. S. Mint – The Paris Mint sent copies of some medals.
They were used to hub soft, gun metal, dies. These did not last long.

The U. S. Mint (Barber) made copy dies of some medals in the 1870s.

John Stewart at Stony point was never restruck and no copy dies were ever made.
DeFleury at Stony point, and Nathanial Greene at Eutaw Springs were never restruck from the original dies.

Cast copies and Electro-types also exist for Comitia Americana medals.

Distinguishing strikings can be problematic.

MORE RECENT STRIKINGS

- "Peanut" Bronze copies were made from 1930s(?) to the 80s.

In 1976 America's First Medals were produced in reduced size in pewter.

BOOKS

- *Comitia Americana and Related Medals* – John W. Adams and Ann E. Bentley
- *American Colonial history Illustrated by Contemporary Medals* – C. Wyllys Betts
- *Medals of the United States mint The First Century 1792 – 1892* – R. W. Julian
- *The Medallic History of the United States of America 1778 – 1876* – J. F. Loubat
- *1986 price Guide for "Medals of the United States mint The First Century 1792 – 1892 "* – Rich Harzog (useful for mintages)

CATALOGS

- John J. Ford Jr. Collection: Coins, Medals, and Currency
- Part XIV Stack's May 23, 2006